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United States Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington 25, D. C.

August 17, 1954

VIA LIAISON

MEMORANDUM

RE: RADIO COMMUNICATIONS IN FOREIGN
COUNTRIES AND EFFECT OF RECIPROCAL
RADIO AGREEMENTS ON INTERNAL
SECURITY OF UNITED STATES

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Reciprocal radio agreements between foreign countries and the United States, whereby foreign governments are granted the right to operate radio stations in the United States in return for similar rights in their countries, pose many serious internal security problems.

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It is obvious that such radio facilities set up in an official or quasi-official establishment of a foreign government would be used extensively by that government's intelligence service as well as by its diplomatic staff. In the event of an emergency involving the United States and a government having such radio rights, the United States would be in no position to control the foreign government's communications. This, of course, would work to the great disadvantage of the United States.

It also must be realized that radio transmissions can be sent at such a high rate of speed as to make interception most difficult. Even when proper interception is effected, the time-consuming problem of decipherment remains with no guarantee of success. It is believed that the amount of radio traffic resulting therefrom would be considerable.

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It is understood, of course, that limited reciprocal rights would be negotiated with a few select foreign governments when deemed to be in the best interest of the United States, however, it also must be considered that in the field of international affairs, a friendly nation today is not necessarily a dependable ally tomorrow.

Benefits which accrue to the United States by virtue of the establishment of radio stations in foreign countries are apparent. Reciprocal arrangements permitting foreign governments to operate radio facilities in the United States would add considerably to the internal security problems already facing United States domestic intelligence agencies.

For reasons set out herein this Bureau is opposed to such reciprocal agreements as would permit foreign governments to operate radio facilities in the United States.